

[Youth Commission Recommendations for the 2018-2023 Youth Empowerment Allocation]

Resolution urging the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, and Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families to Resource Youth Organizing and Leadership Amidst Increased Attacks on Our Communities

WHEREAS, since Trump was elected into office there have been increased attacks on public education, the environment, women, and on immigrant, Black, Muslim, and LGBTQ communities; and WHEREAS, the majority of youth did not elect Trump but are particularly vulnerable to his presidency; and

WHEREAS, Trump appointed Betsy DeVos as the head of education having no personal experience in navigating the public-school education system and has threatened federal cuts towards public school education; and

WHEREAS, according to SFUSD's 2016 Quick Facts Report, 55,320 of 95,000 projected school-aged youth are enrolled in public school; and

WHEREAS, SFUSD overwhelmingly serves Latino and Asian youth, who make up a combined 62.8% of SFUSD students; and

WHEREAS, youth enrolled in DACA and Muslim youth are particularly vulnerable to Trump; and

WHEREAS, Trump has repeatedly threatened to deport undocumented immigrants in first 100 days, including undocumented youth and their families; and

WHEREAS, the Trump administration has unsuccessfully enacted a travel ban, limiting travelers from predominantly Muslim nations; and

WHEREAS, environmental racism disproportionately affects youth from communities of color; and

WHEREAS, the lowest voter turnout is amongst young people and in communities of color; and

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WHEREAS, in San Francisco the lowest voter turnout is in District 10, the district with the most youth and children; and

WHEREAS, there is a lack of youth voice on decision making bodies, and even in San Francisco, youth voice is often discounted in policy discussions; and

WHEREAS, young San Franciscans need to have a say in shaping their future in a rapidly changing city; and

WHEREAS, the high cost of housing and living plays a large role in displacing long time residents including youth and their families; and

WHEREAS, young people have lead and continue to lead movements for justice in the bay area; and

WHEREAS, in San Francisco young people have successfully advocated for Free Muni for youth and Free City College, proving their motivation and investment in the city; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco city government supports the organizing efforts of youth through the Youth Empowerment Fund, and more specifically by putting on events like Youth Advocacy Day and by supporting organizations directly working on empowering youth; and

WHEREAS, Youth organizing directly benefits youth in unrelated areas of their life, “Involvement in organizing increases young people’s educational motivation and aspirations...Eighty percent of students noted their grades improved and 60% reported that they took more challenging coursework due to their involvement in organizing. Eighty percent of youth reported plans to pursue a college education and close to half of the sample said they expected to obtain a graduate or professional degree beyond college”; and

1 WHEREAS, the San Francisco Youth Commission, in partnership with DYCF and SFPL,
2 hosted a youth town hall on youth empowerment and leadership on May 17, 2017 that was attended
3 by over 70 young people; and

4 WHEREAS, at this town hall, young people provided feedback on the issues of most important
5 to them and the training, leadership development, and resources they need in order to become
6 leaders; and

7 WHEREAS, Youth Commissioners hosted a feedback session on a problem statement
8 concerning why we need to invest in the leadership of young San Franciscans at this time, resulting in
9 the agreement on the following concerns: 1) Young San Franciscans need to have a say in shaping the
10 future of a rapidly changing City. 2) There is a strong need for a community leadership pipeline to recruit
11 and retain qualified and dedicated leaders. 3) There is increasing awareness of the need for youth voice
12 on decision-making bodies, but little dedicated support. 4) There is low voter turnout among young
13 people and in San Francisco's lowest income communities. 5) We are witnessing increasing attacks on
14 public education, the environment, and on immigrant, Black, Muslim, and LGBTQ communities; and

15 WHEREAS Youth Commissioners hosted a feedback session on a statement of principles that
16 ought to guide the City's investments in youth leadership and organizing, and those principles include:
17 1) The importance of youth organizing for social justice; 2) Young people's capacity and right to lead
18 change efforts; 3) Leadership by those most affected 4) Solidarity, unity, and alliance; 5) Dedicated
19 support for young people's participation; 6) Youth empowerment as youth development and community
20 development; 7) Developing leadership for the long term; now therefore be it

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22 RESOLVED, that the Youth Commission urges that the Youth Empowerment allocation, and
23 other City investments in youth empowerment and leadership be aligned with and address the
24 following eight recommendations, developed in consultation with youth leaders in San Francisco:
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- 1 1) Ongoing and increased investment in youth organizing. San Francisco needs continuing
2 investment in youth organizing strategies that are policy-focused and build young people's
3 engagement in City government. We would like young people to have the chance to identify
4 issues of importance to them, develop specific asks of decision-makers, create a plan for
5 addressing the problem, and move peers and community members to get active on their issue.
6 These opportunities will make government more responsive to young people, allow youth to feel
7 a sense of their own power, and build an understanding of the functioning of school district, local,
8 and state government and how young people can impact decisions there;
- 9 2) Skill-building and training opportunities. City and school district partners should collaborate and
10 invest in developing and providing a core leadership curriculum to youth advocates, organizers,
11 and advisors, with a focus on understanding city government and school district, understanding
12 the nature of policy change and the legislative process, and strategic approaches to researching,
13 proposing, and advocating for change. The Youth Commission regularly opens its core trainings
14 up to youth serving on other city and/or school district advisory bodies, however, the training
15 series is only offered once a year, enrollment capacity is limited, and the ability to modify
16 curriculum to be relevant to other advisory bodies and/or advocacy efforts is limited in its current
17 framework;
- 18 3) Convenings where youth can engage across neighborhoods and issues. Building strong and
19 effective networks of youth advocates and leaders requires opportunities for sharing and mutual
20 learning. Youth advocates need chances to connect with others across organizations and
21 neighborhoods, learn from peers working on related issues, develop shared strategies, and
22 share best practices and tools;
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1 4) Support for the development of a citywide youth platform outlining issues of importance to young
2 people. Through the coordination of learning and convening spaces as mentioned above, young
3 people could develop a “platform” of issues they are interested in working on and coordinating
4 efforts on. This “platform” would allow young people to identify issues of primary importance to
5 them during a difficult time in both local and national history. It would help align training
6 opportunities, and could provide a framework for public and private investment in youth
7 leadership in San Francisco;

8 5) Investment in a Leadership Pipeline for San Francisco. We propose the development of a
9 comprehensive leadership pipeline for young people that includes: a) Scalable tools that allow
10 students to learn organizing skills, develop analysis, and take action in their neighborhoods and
11 on their campuses. These could include toolkits, curriculum, and best practice guides that link to
12 training and convening opportunities; and b) Community organizing opportunities for high school
13 students that map on to post-secondary education/training, fellowships, and/or employment
14 opportunities for older youth. This would serve as a coordinated pathway to introduce young
15 people to organizing, develop their skills, and transition them to further leadership and
16 employment opportunities, consistent with the need to get young San Franciscans interested in
17 the field of youth development and community service. This could also encompass agreements
18 with post-secondary institutions. When done well, this pathway will help us make large impacts,
19 grow new leaders for the long term, and build a more inclusive City;

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21 6) Leadership development practices and opportunities integrated across the city’s investments in
22 youth services. Youth inclusion in decision-making is a best practice for youth-serving
23 organizations and should be considered a baseline for providing effective and competent
24 services to young people. Reserving the Youth Empowerment Allocation for youth-led leadership
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and advocacy opportunities can help raise the bar for the inclusion of youth leadership development components across all programs;

7) Investment in voter registration and turnout. Invest in voter registration and education, especially for high school age youth, ensuring all 16-17 year olds have the opportunity to pre-register to vote under the new state law;

8) Support for youth sitting on advisory bodies. As part of the effort to recruit and train a pool of qualified applicants, and to support City advisory bodies in receiving the full value of young people’s advising insight, we propose an increased commitment to mentorship and training for youth serving on City advisory bodies; training on youth-adult partnerships for board and commission staff and chairs working in partnership with youth on joint youth-adult bodies; and stipend compensation for young people sitting on adult-led bodies or for providing advising and guidance to adults.